A DISCOURSE

ON

PSALMODY,

DELIVERED AT

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A Discourse, &c.

COLLOSSIANS, 3, 16.—Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, in all wisdom: teaching and admonishing one another in Psalms, and Hymns, and Spiritual Songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

That it is the duty of all men to sing praise to God, few, perhaps, will deny. That it is a duty incumbent on the Christian, all must admit, who regard the Bible as the rule of faith and practice.

There are few duties more frequently enjoined in the word of God, than that of praise; and as it is repeatedly urged, so it is one of the most pleasant duties the believer has to perform. Whether the duty of praising God in psalms and hymns was attended to in the Patriarchal age, we are not distinctly informed. It was engaged in, occasionally, in the time of Moses; but in the days of David, "the sweet psalmist of Israel," the exercise of praising God, not only in psalms, but also in hymns and spiritual songs, was brought to perfection, both as to the matter, and the manner.

This delightful exercise is greatly neglected in our day. Multitudes sit in the house of God with closed lips, and in some fashionable assemblies, the praise, if it merits the name, is carried on by proxy. An organ or a band of musicians, conduct the praise, while a majority of the congregation sit silent, and many of them turn to gaze upon the performers, and to listen to their melodious strains. The band, or choir, endeavour to act their part well, and if they succeed, *they* get the praise, and *God* is in a good degree, if not entirely, kept out of view, by many persons in these theatrical exhibitions. Where the songs of praise are sung which God has authorized to be used in his worship, every man who is not incapacitated by some bodily infirmity, should join in the song.—Praise is one of the principal employments of Heaven, and how could that man endure to be eternally employed in the high praise of God above, who is too cold, or too haughty, to spend an half hour occasionally in this delightful exercise on earth? There are persons who approve of the use of David's Psalms in the worship of God, who do not always join in praise, not that they have any real difficulties to contend with, but they are indifferent on the subject; they have not the will to discharge what they acknowledge to be a duty. A few can be found who will not sing the psalms of David, because the advocates of David will not unite with them in singing hymns of human composition.—Those who act in this way, certainly do not understand their own principles; they are actuated by sheer bigotry and prejudice. Intelligent men who make use of human compositions in the praise of God *prefer*

them to the psalms of David, not that they consider it wrong to use the songs of inspiration; so that the man who refuses to sing these songs because his neighbour cannot conscientiously join with him in the use of human hymns, is ignorant of his own principles, and is actuated by feelings at war with the unbounded liberality of the present age. All then, ought to join in the use of David's psalms, because, although a man may prefer other hymns, yet no man of understanding will reject the psalms of inspiration as utterly unfit for use. No one can consider it a *sin* to sing these divine songs in the praise of God; if there be any such, either here, or elsewhere, I pity their stupidity, and deplore their impiety.

It is my object to-day, however, not only to maintain that all should join in praise when the psalms of David are used—that there should be no mutes in such an assembly of worshippers—but that no other songs of praise should *be used in the worship of God, but those which are known in the Scriptures as the psalms of David.* In discussing this subject I do not intend giving any personal offence. It is a subject, however, of such a nature that one cannot speak upon it without offending some. Many persons who are in the habit of using hymns of human composition, are very sensitive on the subject of Psalmody; to touch it, so as to disapprove of their course, is to touch the apple of their eye, and to incur their deep displeasure. But if it is true that the psalms of David, and they only, should be used in the praise of God, then it is a duty to maintain this truth, and to maintain it, not merely at the risk of giving offence to a few individuals, but at any, and at every risk. If it is God's will that the psalms of David should be used in his praise to the end of time, then to be silent on this subject, and to suffer this truth to fall to the ground, would be to incur his displeasure; and it were better to stir up the indignation of earth and hell in the defence of any truth, than by neglecting it, or passing it over in silence, to call down the wrath of the Almighty. I have no wish to give offence to any one, but if any thing severe should be spoken against Dr. Watts, against his, or any other system of human psalmody, no doubt some will be offended. But why should they? Is the Christian church more indebted to Dr. Watts, Wesley, Rippon, or to any other poet, or poetaster, than she is to the *sweet Psalmist of Israel?* We are indebted to David, Asaph, and others, for one of the most excellent portions of the word of God, and if Dr. Watts has written very hard things of David's psalms, or of that holy spirit by whom they were dictated, will it be considered unkind to retort, and in defending the songs of inspiration, to say such things of Dr. Watts, and his system of psalmody, as the nature of the case may demand. The truth ought not to offend any man, and it is the truth we seek, and hope to elicit, at the present time, on the subject before us.

Perhaps some one will say that there is no necessity for agitating the subject again. The dispute has long been settled, the angry feelings which its discussion formerly excited, have subsided; Christians have agreed to differ on this point, and it is impolitic to renew the war, and stir up old animosity. It should be our special care not to mar the peace of Zion unnecessarily. But what is the foundation of her peace? Is it not truth? And if three-fourths of the Christian church are in error

on the subject of psalmody, would it be kind or Christian-like, for the remaining fourth to observe silence, and never present the truth on this important point, and practice accordingly? The dispute about psalmody is not settled, nor will the truth on this subject cease to be maintained as long as the Associate Reformed Church, and those Christian denominations that coincide with her in opinion, are true to their principles. And when the Jews are restored to the favor of God, and are called to raise again "the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and to close up the breaches thereof, and to raise up his ruins, and build it as in the days of old," they will agitate the Gentile church on the subject of psalmody, until a glorious reformation in sentiment and practice is produced. They will not readily relinquish the inspired songs of their own sweet psalmist, for the florid, or the frivolous effusions which every scribbling rhymer may obtrude upon the church.

Some may suppose that there is no use in this discussion, for it matters not what a man sings, provided he is *sincere*, and his song is of a religious or moral character. If sincerity in worship proves that the worship is right, then the devotees of Popery, the followers of the "false Prophet," the degraded idolaters of India, are all right, for who on earth are more sincere in their devotions, than these benighted and deluded creatures? Who more sincere than the prophets of Baal, and yet how abominable their idolatry? Sincerity, then, in worship, is no proof that the worship is right, and acceptable unto God. God certainly requires of us sincerity in our religious exercises, but in these exercises we must have respect to the divine commandment, or else the deepest devotion will avail us nothing. Praising God is a duty of the first importance, and to say that it matters not what we sing, provided our hearts are sincere in the duty, is to speak as those who "understand neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm." Praising God is not a mere *punctilio* in religion, it is one of the *essentials* in divine worship. By the word essential, I do not mean that it is absolutely necessary to sing the psalms of David in order to reach the kingdom of Heaven, for I have enough of that charity which "hopeth all things," to hope, and believe, that many of those who reject these inspired songs as unfit for the New Testament Church, will reach the blessed mansions above; but, by the word essential, I mean that the use of David's psalms is *essential to praise*; and that the use of human compositions in the praise of God, is so much labour lost. What can be of higher importance than the praise of God? It is the most interesting part of divine worship—an exercise peculiar to the realms of light. And as God only knows his own nature and perfections, and what is due to him from his creatures, who but God can determine what kind of songs or sentiments will constitute his praise? In prayer, we are to make known *our* wants to God; but the Scriptures assure us that we "know not what we should pray for as we ought, but the spirit helpeth our infirmities." Now if we cannot express *our* wants—if we cannot make out our *own* case without divine help, how are we to determine what praise is *due to God*, without the inspiration and guidance of his Holy Spirit? Those, however, who make hymns for the use of the church, do not claim to be inspired, nor can they claim even divine guidance, as the Spirit is never promised to

assist any one in preparing hymns for the Church, as he is promised to those who are engaged in prayer. When Christ ascended to heaven and led captivity captive, he gave gifts to men, and "he gave some, Apostles, and some, Prophets, and some, Evangelists, and some, Pastors, and some, Teachers," but no Poets, no Poets! And what was the reason the divine Saviour did not give Poets as well as Pastors, "for the perfecting of the saints, and for the work of the ministry? Was it an oversight in him, or was it because he had appointed his servant David, and others, to prepare a complete system of Psalmody, suited to the Church in all ages, that he refused under the new dispensation to ordain an order of men whose chief duty should consist in supplying the Church from time to time with new and appropriate songs of praise? This is the reason why Christ did not appoint poets as well as other officers in the new Testament church. He had furnished his followers with a complete collection of Hymns—with a *Book of Psalms*, and when God provides a Book it is a finished production; God's work is perfect, and for any mere mortal to attempt to improve upon the Book of Pslams; to amend it by omitting or inserting such things as his distempered imagination may suppose an improvement, is we fear, to be guilty of the sin, and exposed to the awful judgment denounced against such a character, as is recorded in the closing verses of the Bible. And to bid a man "God speed" by sustaining or countenancing him in such a work, is to be a partaker of his evil deeds.

Various arguments might be adduced in favor of the exclusive use of David's Pslams in the worship of God.

The *first* and principal reason which I shall present on this subject is, *the Divine appointment.*

It will be admitted no doubt, by all who profess to believe and recieve the Bible as the book of God, that its contents are of divine inspiration. The Pslams were composed by David, Asaph, and others, and are called the "Psalms of David," because they were generally from his pen; yet strictly speaking, they are neither the Psalms of David, nor of any other man, but they are the Psalms of God; the songs of the divine spirit, who employed David and others as his amanuensis in preparing these sacred hymns. Now we contend that the Psalms, Hymns, and spiritual songs of the Holy Ghost, usually called the *Psalms of David*, are to be used in the praise of God until the end of time, or until God himself shall supply the place with another inspired collection, a boon which we have no ground from God's word to anticipate. We plead then, not for the use of Rouses version, but for the use of David s Psalms, faithfully and fairly translated either into verse, so that they can be sung, or into prose, and so arranged that they can be chanted. If there are any of the Psalms that cannot be fairly translated into metrical verse, let such be prepared in prose for chanting. We plead for the exclusive use of David's Pslams in the worship of God, and if Rouses version *is* David's Psalms, if it is the only faithful metrical version now in use, then we contend for it, until a better can be obtained; but of this version I shall speak in the sequel. And why, it will be asked, do you plead so strenuously for the exclusive use of these divine songs? I answer because God has authorised their use both under the old and new Testa-

ment dispensations. It will be generally admitted the Psalms of David were designed for the use of old Testament Saints In fact those who refuse to sing these songs of praise now, admit and maintain that they were intended for the old dispensation, but do not suit new Testament times, until they have undergone a radical change, until David has been taught to speak like a christian, to use the words of Dr. Watts. It will not be necessary to dwell long in attempting to prove what all admit, viz that David's Psalms were divinely appointed to be used in the old Testament church. In 2 Sam. 23: 1. David is called, or calls himself, "the sweet Psalmist of Israel." As a Psalmist his business was to compose Psalms just as it was the duty of a Prophet to prophesy. And as the *Psalmist of Israel*, it was his duty to make Psalms *for* Israel. David did not arrogate this title "the sweet Psalmist" to himself; he was authorised by the Lord to assume it, as Paul was authorised to call himself an Apostle. As Paul was called and ordained to the Apostleship, so was David to the office of Psalmist, and it devolved on him to provide hymns of praise for Israel, and to arrange the order and manner of giving thanks. By referring to 2 Chron. 29: 25—30. and other portions of the old Testament, it will be seen that the Psalms of David were authorised to be used in the Temple service at Jerusalem. The use of this inspired collection of Hymns was then authorised in the old Testament church, and I ask, when was that authority annulled? When did it cease to be a duty to use this authorised collection? The peculiar *manner* of praising God in the Temple at Jerusalem, ceased to be practised, as a thing of course, when the Temple was destroyed, and the Jews dispersed, but did the *matter* of praise authorised under the old dispensation, cease to be praise at the coming of Christ or at the destruction of the Temple? Were David's Psalms "taken out of the way, and nailed to the cross," as a part of that "hand-writing of ordinance which was against us, and was contrary to us?" If not then the presumption is, that we are still bound to use them, and consequently those who have set them aside, and substituted in their stead mere human compositions are greatly at fault.

I shall now attempt to prove that the use of these Psalms is authorised under the new, as well as under the old dispensation. "To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." The light, however, from God's word on this subject, is clear and convincing, and let no one wilfully close his eyes against it, lest peradventure he be found fighting against God.

1. It is evident from many of the Psalms themselves that their use was not to be confined to the Jews, nor to the Temple of Jerusalem. A few references will shew that these inspired songs were not intended merely for the old Testament Church, but are likewise fitted and designed for the new economy. In Psalm 96: 1. *all the earth* is called on to sing unto the Lord a new song. A similar command is given in Psalms 98: 4. and 100: 1. In Psalm 113: 1—3. The servants of the Lord are enjoined to praise his name. Nor was the praise to be confined to one short period or dispensation; no, "blessed be the name of the Lord, *from this time forth and forever more.*" Nor were the Jews to be the only people who should sing these sacred hymns

but the declaration is "from the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same, the Lord's name is to be praised." From these and many other Psalms that might be cited, it is clear that the praise of God was not to be confined to that little spot called Palestine, nor to the Mosaic dispensation; but the command is, that "all lands" should praise God, and praise him too "forevermore." The question now is, what is to be sung from the rising to the setting sun? The Psalms of inspiration, or the productions of mere men? Did the Holy Spirit provide a book of praise, and yet intend that the Church should praise him with any thing, and every thing, but with the songs which he himself had dictated; or if such songs were used, men might so mar and mutilate them, if they chose, in order to suit the times, that an angel would not recognize them to be the same. When God calls upon all the earth to praise his name, no candid man will suppose that he designed to leave it optional with man what they should sing. Had he provided no book of Psalms, and at the same time enjoined it on man to praise his name, then it would have been fair to infer that they were left to choose for themselves a system of Psalmody. But as the matter stands, such an inference is altogether inadmissible. We, as well as the Israelites, are repeatedly commanded in the Psalms themselves to sing *them* to the praise of God, and a commmand from the Psalms on this subject is as obligatory on us, as if it had come from Paul or James, or Christ himself.

2. A second proof that the Psalms of David are authorised to be used in the new Testament Church, I draw from the example of Christ and his Apostles —Christ and his disciples established the new Testament Church. They changed the old order of things, and introduced the new dispensation. Some parts of the old economy were entirely abrogated, and other parts changed. Baptism comes in the room of circumcision, and the Lord's supper in the place of the Passover; but what change, I ask, took place relative to Psalmody? Were the Pslams of David laid aside and a new collection brought forward by Christ and his Apostles better adapted to the new dispensation? If so where is the proof? Produce the new Psalter, and prove its authenticity, and we will investigate its claims to preference in the worship of God. We shall, however, be saved the trouble of such investigation, for very obvious reasons. Had it been necessary that other Psalms and Hymns than those of David should have been prepared for the new Testament Church, why did not Christ & his Apostles prepare such Hymns? Was it meet that a matter of so much importance should be neglected for centuries, and then left to the direction of uninspired men? John the Baptist introduced the Gospel day, why did he not usher it in by a song or songs of praise suited to the occasion? He witnessed many scenes that might have called into action the latent poetry and melody of his soul, and caused him to give utterance to the rapture of his heart in songs of joy and thanksgiving. There were the crowds on the banks of Jordan waiting for baptism— there was the baptism of Christ himself, and the voice from the excellent glory saying, "this is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased" —there was the descent of the spirit in the form of a Dove—a fit occasion for singing, "Come Holy Spirit, heavenly Dove"—these and other things afforded the Baptist excellent themes for songs of praise

for the Gospel church. But where shall we find a stanza, a line, or even an allusion to a new song or Psalm prepared by the forerunner for the new dispensation? Nor does it appear that Jesus himself ever prepared a Psalm during his sojourn on earth, for the Gospel church. We read of his sermons, his prayers, his miracles, his sweet and heavenly conversation, but is there ever a word said of his preparing a collection of hymns, or a single hymn, for the new economy? It is recorded of him, that after partaking of the last Passover, and instituting the Supper, he and his disciples "sung an hymn;" and this is sometimes brought forward as an argument in favor of introducing human composition into the praise of God! The argument is weak, very weak, but "drowning men will catch at straws," and some men will support a bad cause by very weak arguments. There is no proof that Christ made this hymn in question for that special occasion, much less is it likely that he selected a hymn composed by some uninspired man to close the celebration of the Passover and the Supper, when he had a whole Book of Psalms and Hymns at hand dictated by his own spirit from which he could have selected.

Christ had partaken of the Passover for a number of years, and he had joined with the Jews in singing the Hallel, the hymn they usually sung at the close of the Passover Supper, consisting of six Psalms, beginning with the hundred and thirteenth; and will it be pretended, that when the last Passover was celebrated, and the Lord's Supper instituted in its stead, the blessed Saviour laid aside his own divine songs, composed by David, and chose some hymn of human composition, with which to close this interesting celebration? Those who resort to such a subterfuge to justify the use of human composition in the praise of God, prove at least that they are pressed for argument, and that the cause which is supported by such ratiocination is utterly indefensible. It requires no argument to prove that the Saviour never furnished the New Testament Church with a single Psalm of praise, except those denominated the Psalms of David. He did not provide the Church with Gospel and Epistles; that duty he committed to the hands of the Apostles, and certainly if he had thought it necessary to furnish the Church with new songs of praise, he would have ordained John, or James, or Paul, to the task. It was undoubtedly the province of Christ, as the great King and Prophet of his Church, to direct the Apostles, and inspire them to furnish her with a new system of Psalmody, as well as with a new Testament and new ordinances, but was ever any one of the Apostles engaged in any such an undertaking? They sometimes speak of Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, and quote from them, but did they ever quote from a Psalm or song of their own making? No, they always quote from the Psalms of David. They tell us of their travelling, their preaching, their prayers, their contentions and trials, but who ever heard of an Apostolic hymn? Was it because they lacked for subjects sufficiently grand and inspiring; that they forebore to roll off the poetic numbers for the use of the Church? There was the incarnation of the Son of God—there was the blind receiving sight, the lame walking, the deaf hearing, the dumb speaking, the dead raised to life, the Gospel preached to the poor—there was the agony, the crucifixion, the resurrection, the ascension of the Lord of glory, the out pouring of the Spirit

on the day Pentecost, the gift of tongues, and the triumph of the Gospel. With all these things the Apostles were familiar, they conversed, they preached, they prayed over them, but where is it ever intimated that they composed a Psalm or Hymn on any of these subjects for the use of the Church, or for their own past time? And what was the reason the Apostles did not provide a book of Psalms for the new dispensation? Simply because they had no command from God to this effect. The humble fishermen of Galilee had not presumption enough to obtrude their own uninspired effusions on the Church as something better adapted to her state and circumstances, than the songs of the Holy Spirit. It is beyond controversy that Christ and his Apostles used nothing but the Psalms of David in the praise of God. If they did use other hymns either of divine or human composure, let the proof, "strong as Holy Writ," be furnished. Did Christ then, the King and head of the Church use the Psalms of David himself—did his Apostles use them in praise and nothing else—and shall we presume to affirm that they are unfit to be sung by us? I hold then the example of Christ and his Apostles in the use of David's Psalms, and their refusal, or omission to provide another collection of Hymns, is the strongest kind of authority for the continued use of this inspired Psalter. If these Psalms suited the Church when it was founded by Christ and his Apostles, they are still praise, and will be to the end of time, and the very praise too that God requires at our hands, and no man can reject them, and substitute in their place mere human compositions, without great presumption and terrible risk.

3. A third proof that the Psalms of David are to be used in the new Testament Church in the praise of God, we draw from the positive command of Paul and James to that effect. Paul says in the language of the text, "let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in Psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord." The command in Eph. 5: 19. is of the same import. The Apostle James says, "is any merry? let him sing Psalms." Here are divine commands to sing "Psalms, Hymns and Spiritual songs," and that the Apostles had reference to the Psalms of David, in giving these injunctions, will appear evident from two or three considerations.

First. The Apostles, being Jews, had been trained up to the use of David's Psalms. They had never, we believe, used any thing else. They were satisfied with this divine collection, and had no authority to provide a new book of praises. When therefore these inspired men enjoin it on the saints to sing Psalms, they must necessarily refer to the Psalms of David, the Psalms they used themselves, and the only book of Praises then in existence. They would not direct the saints at Ephesus, at Colosse, and elsewhere—just converted from heathenism—just emerging from the pollution and crime connected with Idolatry—scarcely made acquainted with the first principles of true religion—surely the Apostles would not direct such "babes in Christ," to make Psalms and hymns for themselves, but to use those already prepared to their hand by the Lord of Heaven himself. What would be thought of the Missionary in our day who would instruct the newly converted heathen, knowing but little of God or Religion, to provide himself with

a collection of Psalms and hymns? In fact a great majority of the most advanced and intelligent christians, in christian lands, feel themselves unequal to such a task. When Paul therefore commands saints in his day, to sing Psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, he must necessarily refer to the Psalms of David, the only collection of hymns then in use—the Hymns that he and his fellow Apostles, that Christ and the saints of old had sung. If this be the reference, then we are bound to use the same compilation of sacred songs, for the command in the text is binding on us, and on believers in every age, as well as on the primitive Christians.

A *second* reason why Paul enjoins in the text, the use of David's Psalms and not human composition, is, that these Psalms are *the word of Christ.* "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom." The whole Bible is the word of Christ dictated by his spirit, but Paul recommends to the special attention of Christians, that part of the word of Christ contained in the Psalms, as peculiarly suited to the wants of God's people, as profitable for teaching, admonition, for joy and praise. No book of Psalms and Hymns has ever been composed that could be called the word of Christ, but the Psalms of David, they are his word, and therefore Paul, must, without doubt, refer to these Psalms in the language of the text.

A *third* reason why Paul enjoins the use of David's Psalms in the text is, that these Psalms contain the different kinds of composition which the Apostle specifies, viz: "Psalms Hymns and spiritual songs." Because the Psalms of David are called *Psalms*, it does not follow that there are no *hymns* or spiritual *songs* in the collection. One of the strong arguments in favor of human Psalmody seems to be drawn from the language of the text. The command is, we are told, to sing *hymns* and *spiritual songs*, but it is sometimes more than insinuated that the Psalms of David are *all Psalms*, and therefore if we sing hymns and spiritual songs at all, we must first compose them. The "simple faithful" who can be influenced by any thing that resembles an argument, may be satisfied with such a shallow sophism. But should those who are capable of reading and reflecting for themselves be prevailed on by such reasoning to reject the songs of the Lord, "the word of Christ," for the imperfect, unauthorized songs, of imperfect though well designing men. And is it fair and honest for those who are Pastors and teachers to mislead, or suffer the common people to be misled by such false and flimsy arguments, into the devious paths of error, in a matter of so much importance as the praise of God? Every man who professes to be but partially acquainted with this subject ought to know that in the Hebrew Bible various titles are prefixed to a number of Psalms. Some are entitled *Mizmor*, a Psalm or spiritual song, others are called *Shir*, a song, and others *Hallelooyah*, praise ye Jehovah. A late writer touching on this point, with an eye to the septuagint, says, "we find one *Psalmos* (Psalm) another *Ode*, (song) and another *Halleluiah*. The last title is made up of two Hebrew words, which signify "praise ye the Lord," and identifies the poem to which it is prefixed with that of which the Greek term *Hymnos* (Hymn) is the proper specific title."*

* Summerville on Psalmody, page 75.

Although the title "Psalms" is generally given to the whole of David's Psalms, yet the Jews were in the habit of calling them *songs and hymns* as well as Psalms. This is evident from the manner in which Josephus speaks on this subject. He says that "David, being free from wars and dangers, and enjoying for the future a profound peace, composed *songs* and *hymns* to God of several sorts of metre—and that, he also made instruments of music, and taught the Levites to sing *hymns* to God." The object in view at present is not to define what is meant by these titles, but to prove that such were prefixed to many of the Psalms, and hence we conclude that when Paul enjoined it on Christians to sing Psalms, Hymns and spiritual Songs, he must have referred to the book, and the only book, that contained such a variety of sacred poems. Before the time of Christ the Hebrew Bible was translated into Greek, by seventy two individuals, as was supposed, and from the number of translators, it was called the septuagint, or the translation of the seventy. This Greek Bible was in common use in the time of Christ; and like the Hebrew Bible it had titles prefixed to many of the Psalms. The Colossians to whom the text was directed, were Greeks, and no doubt some of them were in possession of this septuagint or Greek translation of the Bible, and when the Apostles directed them to "teach and admonish one another in Psalms, Hymns, and spiritual Songs," all they had to do was to open their Bibles, and there they would find among the Psalms, some entitled Psalms, some hymns, and others spiritual songs, and they might have "searched creation round" without finding another book of divine poems designated by the same titles. We argue then that Paul, in the text, refers to the Psalms of David the only book in existence containing Psalms or poetical pieces, with these different distinctive titles which he specifies. Thus, this text of scripture, so often and so confidently brought forward as proof in favour of human composition in the praise of God, makes nothing for the cause, but must be viewed as a positive command to use the Psalms of David—the word of Christ.

The divine authority then for the use of David's Psalms is clear and full—from the Psalms themselves—from the example of Christ and his Apostles, and from the express injunction contained in the text. But what authority can be advanced in favour of human composition in the praise of God? Not "the shadow of a shade" of authority can be produced from the word of God to favour this cause. What then is the duty of those who have adopted a system of human Psalmody, to the utter exclusion of the songs of inspiration from the worship of God? Is it not plainly and clearly their duty, to abandon the present practice, to follow the example of Christ and his Apostles in the use of David's Psalms, as well as in other things, and so render to God that praise, which is authorized, and will be acceptable to him? Without faith it is impossible to please God, especially in matters of worship; but there can be no faith in performing an act of worship unless there is some kind of divine authority for it, and as there is no authority either from precept or example for the use of human composition in the praise of God, so there can be no faith in exercise in rendering such praise, and consequently there can be no profit in such worship; it cannot be acceptable to

God, who is a jealous God, and will not give his glory to another, nor his praise to graven images, nor to any human measures that may be introduced into his worship. The want of divine authority is sufficient of itself to cause the sober and reflecting in other denominations to abandon the use of human Psalmody, but I proceed to give as a *Second* reason for the use of David's Psalms, that they are infinitely better adapted to the praise of God, than the human Psalmody now in use. To prove this it would be sufficient to observe that the Psalms of David are *divine*, while those of Dr. Watts and others are *human*, and consequently there must be an infinite disparity between the two, and a fitness in the one for the praise of God, that does not belong to the other. It is urged by Dr. Watts and by many of his admirers, as an objection to the Psalms of David, that they are not suited to Christian worship. The Doctor in his preface to his imitation of the Psalms, labours to prove that they are not adapted to the *Christian* Church, and therefore he has *very kindly* undertaken to alter or amend this book of God so as to adapt it to new Testament times. It was not enough for this learned divine to thrust upon the Church a collection of Hymns purely his own, but with most daring effrontery he must needs lay his hand upon the Poetry of Heaven,—the songs of the Holy Spirit, and by adding and omitting, and amending he has provided an imitation of these songs which is just the thing for the new dispensation!

Dr. Watts objects to the Psalms of David, because that in them, "the Royal Psalmist expresses his own concern*s*, in words exactly suited to his own thoughts, agreeable to his own personal character, and in the language of his own Religion; this keeps all the springs of passion awake, when every line and syllable so nearly effects himself." But says the Doctor, when we, who are christians sing the same lines we express nothing but the character, the concern and the religion of the Jewish King." Suppose it was true that "every line and syllable" of David's Psalms has reference to himself, must we therefore cast away the book as unfit for our day? Upon this principle the Book of Psalms was not adapted either to the old or new dispensation, for it is improper for us to sing that which related to "the character, the concerns and Religion of the Jewish King." It was likewise wrong for the Jews to do so, except perhaps those who lived in his own day and were especially interested in his personal concerns. But are we to reject every part of the scripture of which the writer speaks of himself, or of events that transpired in his day? If so, then we must reject a goodly portion of the new Testament as well as of the old. Paul in many of his Epistles speaks of himself, and of the transactions that took place in his day, and according to the principle of Dr. Watts, the things that relate to the Apostles do not suit our time, and should therefore be excluded from his writings, or else an *imitation* of his Epistles should be furnished, accommodated to the present advanced state of the Church. Almost the whole of the Acts of the Apostles, upon this principle should be cut out of the Bible, and a new set of Acts inserted in their place; for why should we be confined to the old Acts when "every line and syllable" relate to the Apostles and their doings, and when the Missionaries in our day are much more numerous and occupy a much wider field? Thus if we

would fully carry out the principle of Dr. Watts as expressed in his preface to his imitation of the Psalms, and reject every thing in the Bible that we suppose does not suit our day, or *amend* it, so as to *make* it apply to the present state of things, we would soon have no Bible at all, or but mere shreds and patches of the sacred record. It is not true however, that every line and syllable, in the Psalms of David relate to his own private or personal concerns. Some of the Psalms were not written by David at all, and a great majority of those that come from his pen will apply as readily to other Christians as to himself. The Psalms of David are the Word of God, and his whole word is profitable in various respects to believers at all times, especially is this true of the book of Psalms. The *promises* contained in them, are *God's* promises, and when they are read or sung by the christian, he can rely on them with unshaken confidence. When for example we sing in Psalm 121: 5.

"The Lord thee keeps; the Lord thy shade,
On thy right hand doth stay:
The moon by night thee shall not smite,
Nor yet the sun by day,"

we sing God's word—promises on which the soul can rely with the utmost confidence. But the Psalms of Dr. Watts are only an *imitation* of David's, and not even that, for in his Preface he says. "I have entirely omitted some whole Psalms, and large pieces of many others; and have chosen out of all of them, such parts only, as might easily and naturally be accommodated to the various occasions of the christain life." As Dr. Watts Psalms then, are but an imitation of Gods word, and a poor one at that, who could rely upon any *promises* that may be contained in that imitation? They are but imitation promises and are not to be trusted. The Doctor says in Psalm 121: 5.

"No sun shall smite thy head by day,
Nor the pale moon with sickly ray,
Shall blast thy couch; no baleful star
Dart his malignant fire so far."

The first part of this verse consists in imitation promises, that about the "couch" and the "baleful star" are promises of the Doctor's own coining, and his Psalms and Hymns are full of such. Now will any one say that it is more suitable for christians to praise God in imitation promises, and promises purely human, than to sing the great and precious promises of God? The same or similar remarks may be made with reference to the *threatnings* contained in the Psalms of David, which Dr. Watts has imitated. No sinner need tremble through fear of such, they are perfectly harmless; God is under no obligation to inflict the punishment the Doctor has denounced. Every man, we suppose, who is not prejudiced, and wedded to a human Psalmody, will freely admit that those Psalms and Hymns which contain divine promises and threatnings, blessings and judgments, are more suitable for the Church under any dispensation, than hymns containing such things, from the pen of a mere man? And if Dr. Watts or any other writer of Psalms and hymns, should, as they do, describe *Christian experince*, who can rely upon such experience as *infallibly correct?* When we compare our hopes, our joys, our faith or sorrows with the experience of David on these points, we know that we are comparing ourselves with a *standard* that is to be relied on; and if our hopes are like his

they are anchor hopes—if our joys are like his, they are heavenly—if our sorrow for sin is like his, it is genuine, and if our faith is like his, it is saving. Here then is another great advantage in using David's Psalms. In them the Holy Spirit and not man, describes christian experience, and in such descriptions there can be no mistake. It is supposed by some that there are many things in David's Psalms which render them unfit for Christian worship—that Dr. Watts' imitation avoids these defects and hence it is much better adapted to new Testament times than the divine original. It has been well observed that the imitation of a bad thing must be worse than the thing itself. Especially is this true with reference to the word or works of God;—No imitation of God's Word or of his Works can ever equal the original formed by infinite wisdom. This is evident from the numerous defects to be found in the imitation now in question. It is admitted that there are some minor faults in the metre of Rouse's version, but it is denied that there are any defects in the Psalms of David themselves. It is however against these Psalms themselves—against God's own word as it stands in the original that Dr. Watts directs his opposition, and not against Rouse's version—a version which he barely condescends to notice in his Preface.

But let me notice some of the imperfections of this highly extolled imitation, and perhaps its entire fitness for New Testament times may begin to be questioned, and the superority of Dr. Watts over the Poets of Palestine aided by the spirit, may not be altogether taken for granted. In the first place Dr. Watts acknowledges in his preface that he has "entirely omitted some whole Psalms, and large pieces of many others."—Does this render the imitation better adapted to christian worship than the Psalms in their full and complete condition? It is stated that more than fifty verses of the hundred and nineteenth Psalm are omitted in the imitation.* Now what is wrong with this precious portion of God's word, that so much of it should be set aside as unfit for new Testament times? Those who love God's word, (and many such use the imitation,) would not be willing to dispense with fifty verses of this Psalm as it stands in the prose, why then should any one receive this Psalm, and many others without a mumur, when converted into metre, and so horribly mutilated? Certainly such mangling of God's word can make no improvement in the praise.

Again. Watts' imitation contains erroneous expressions. Does this render it more suitable for the new dispensation than the Psalms of David, a portion of God's *truth?*

For the sake of brevity I shall give but one example of erroneous expression from the imitation, though a number might be cited. The example is taken from Psalm 45: 2. 3d. part, L. M.

"At his right hand our eyes behold
"The Queen arrayed in purest gold;
The world admires her heavenly dress;
Her robes of joy and righteousness."

Very good poetry, but very bad sentiment. The scriptures no where represent the *world* as admiring the heavenly dress, the joy and righteousness of the Queen, or Church. On the contrary, from the very

*This, and the following observation in this connection, are taken in part from a Pamphlet on Psalmody by Dr. Anderson of the associate Church.

first God put *enmity* between the seed of the woman, and the seed of the serpent; and Christ says to his disciples, John 15: 19. "If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world *hateth* you." In the conduct of Cain, Ishmael, Esau—in the crucifixion of the Lord of Glory, and in the multitudes that have been beheaded, burnt, and murdered in a thousand ways, by Pagans and Papists, we have dreadful evidence that the world *hates* the Church, instead of admiring her heavenly dress. Is it, I ask, more suitable for the new Testament church, to sing as praise to God, such a sentiment, thrown into smooth verse, than to sing the following? Psalm 45: 9.

"Among thy women honorable,
King's daughters were at hand:
Upon thy right hand did the queen,
In gold of Ophir stand."

This is Rouse, and it is God's word—compare it with the prose or with the original, and as to the metre, it is scarce a whit inferior to the lauded imitation.

Again, Watts' imitation often alters the strain of discourse, does this adapt it to our day, and render it more suitable to promote God's praise than his own word. In the Psalms we often find exhortation, prayer assertion, promises or threatnings, but Dr. Watts in improving upon the Psalms has often taken the liberty of changing the strain of discourse, and instead of an exhortation, he has a profession, instead of a prayer, an assertion, or some other change is wrought on the text. Examples of this kind might be multiplied; see at the close of the Psalm 25, where the imitation has an assertion instead of a prayer, as in the original. Can the warmest friends of Dr. Watts sanction such conduct, or applaud him for his boldness in taking such liberties with the word of God? With what zeal, and energy, and propriety do many who use the imitation, denounce the Roman Catholics for striking the second precept from the Decalogue, but is it more sinful to dispense with one of the commandments, than to dispense with whole Psalms, and to change the matter, and of course the meaning of others? If the Decalogue is not as well adapted to our day without the second commandment as with it, how can the imitation of Dr. Watts be better suited to the worship of God, with its omissions and alterations, than the songs of Zion, pure and entire? And further, in the imitation, the arrangement or method of Psalms is greatly changed; is this no defect? The meaning of a text is frequently to be ascertained by the context. The worst opinions have been propogated and supported by detaching portions of scripture from their connection, and giving them a new position. Suppose Dr. Watts has not propogated any errors in this way; yet is not such a course wrong in itself? Is it not a very bad precedent? Can the friends of the imitation find fault with Universalians and other errorists for disjointing the scriptures to support their opinions, and to *suit their* new Testament dispensation, when they daily sing songs of praise manufactured on the same principle? In many of the Psalms the imitator has gone largely into the work of transposition, and he seems to have resolved on making the two ends of the 119 Psalm to meet, and hence he has brought forward the 165 and 164 verses of this

Psalm and placed them in the first and second parts respectively of his imitation. The whole of this Psalm is greatly transposed, and some of it made entirely new, so that between the fifty verses omitted, and the transposition which it has undergone, with the new matter introduced, it is not the same Psalm at all, but a rhyming compound of the Doctors own creation. Surely the beauty and force of God's truth as contained in the Psalms, must be greatly marred, and weakened by this disconnecting process through which they have passed. They have come to us in perfect symetry from the hand of God—the arrangement is divine—every verse, like every joint in the human system supplies its own place, and certainly the wise and good who use the imitation will not pretend that the good Doctor was better qualified to methodize the Psalms than God himself, and that his disjointed Psalter is better adapted to promote God's praise, than the Psalms of David full and complete, and arranged by infinite wisdom.

Besides the defects already noticed, the imitation contains many more such as the omission of a great many metaphors and figures that the Holly Spirit thought fit to use, for example "kiss the son," "purge me with hyssop," "my soul is among Lions, &c." Also abuse of figures and metaphors, tautological expressions, together with other faults which I shall not notice particularly at present. And now, should this imitation, so lame, so full of defects, and many of them so serious—should it ever have taken the place of the Psalms and Hymns, of the Holy Ghost in which it were impiety and folly to seek for imperfections?

I shall close this argument in which I have attempted to prove that the Psalms of David are better adapted to the praise of God, than those of Dr. Watts, or than human composures, by one or two extracts from Bishop Horne's Preface to his Commentary on the Psalms.

The following quotation from this excellent Author shews that the Psalms of David contain matter of praise to God for the dispensations of his providence and grace from the beginning of creation, to the final consummation of all things, and hence they are not suited to the Jewish dispensation merely, but to the church in all ages.

"The Psalms are an epitome of the Bible, adapted to the purposes of devotion. They treat occasionally of the creation and formation of the world; the dispensations of providence, and the economy of grace; the transactions of the Patriarchs; the exodus of the children of Israel; their journey through the wilderness, and settlement in Canaan; their law, priesthood, and ritual; the exploits of their great men, brought through faith; their sins and captivities, their repentances and restorations; the sufferings and victories of David; the peaceful and happy reign of Solomon; the advent of the Messiah, with its effects and consequences; his incarnation, birth, life, passion, death, resurrection, ascension, kingdom and priesthood; the effusion of the spirit; the conversion of nations; the, rejection of the jews; the establishment, increase, and perpetuity of the Christian Church; the end of the world; the general judgment; the condemnation of the wicked, and the final triumph of the righteous with their Lord and King."*

In this extract we have the *contents* of the Psalms briefly summond up, and if the Bishop is correct, the Psalms contain more of Christ and

* This is not true. The Psalms speak of those things as yet to come; but the new testament

the new Testament Church, than some people imagine, and instead of "every line and syllable" relating to David himself, a great portion of them have reference to the new dispensation, and consequently, being dictated by the Spirit, they are infinitely better adapted to that dispensation, than any human effusions whatever.

Another quotation from the pen of the same pious commentator shews that in his opinion the Psalms of David, "suit mankind in all situations," and in this opinion many good men have and do coincide. "His (David's) invaluable Psalms convey those comforts to others, which they afforded to himself. Composed upon particular occasions, yet designed for general use; delivered out as services for Israelites under the law yet no less adapted to the circumstances of christians under the Gospel; they present religion to us in the most engaging dress; communicating truths which philosophy could never investigate, in a style which poetry can never equal, while history is made the vehicle of Phrophecy, and creation lends all its charms to paint the glories of Redemption. * * * Indited under the influence of Him, to whom all hearts are known, and all events foreknown, they suit mankind in all situations, grateful as the manna which decended from above, and conformed itself to every palate"

I have advanced but *two* arguments in favor of the use of Davids Psalms, viz. the divine commandment enjoining their use, and their superior adaptation to the praise of God. These arguments might be greatly extended, and others advanced, but I have endeavored to study brevity. If the arguments thus presented in favour of these songs are fair, and manly, and conclusive, as we trust they are, then no objection however strong can overthrow them, or should lead us to reject this authorized book of praises; no plea however plausible, should lead us to prefer that which is *human* in the praise of God, to that which is *divine*. But the objections urged against the use of the scripture Psalms are by no means powerful, and no one need fear that the strong and substantial arguments usually advanced in defence of these Psalms will ever be overthrown by the weak and oft refuted objections with which they are assailed. A great many petty observations are made relative to the use of David's Psalms which cannot be noticed at present, I shall consider some of the more weighty objections, and if "Tekel" shall be found written upon them—if when weighed in the balances they are found wanting, of course the weaker objections must fall to the ground, and be viewed as considerations that do not merit a "second sober thought."

1. The first objection to the Psalms of David which I notice is that they *are old and out of date*. We are enjoined repeatedly in the Psalms themselves to sing a *new* song, but the Psalms of David are some 3000 years old, and hence it we comply with the injunction, and sing a new song, we must prepare it ourselves, or have it furnished to our hands by some modern Poet. To this objection I reply, that a book, or a song, can never be considered *old* while its author is still alive. The Psalms and Hymns of Watts and Wesley, are old and out of date, because their authors have long ago expired, and returned to dust. But God is the author of David's Psalms and lives forever, and while he lives, the great and important principles and truths contained in his Psalms

will not grow old. "The word of God, says Peter, liveth and abideth forever. Although the Psalms of David have been used in the Church for many centuries, yet to the truly pious mind they still retain a sweetness and a freshness which is not peculiar to the latest productions of modern poets. Familiarity with these inspired songs does not render them old, and flat, and vapid to the true Christian; but if he sings them a thousand times "with the spirit and with the understanding," they will still be new, will fill his heart with melody and love, and drop from his lips "sweeter than honey, and the honey Comb."

2. A second objection to the Psalms of David is, that they contain such bitter curses against the enemies of David, as to render them unsuitable for christians who are required to love their enimies, and do good to them that despitefully use them, and persecute them.

Dr. Watts in his preface to his *Hymns* says, "while we are kindling into divine love by the meditations of the *loving kindness of God, and the multitude of his tender mercies*, within a few verses some dreadful curse against men is proposed to our lips: That *God would add iniquity unto their iniquity, nor let them come into his righteousness, but blot them out of the book of the living*,—Psalms 69: 26—28,—which is so contrary to the new commandment of *loving our enemies*, &c." He further adds, "while our hearts run on sweetly together, applying the words to our own case, there is something of divine delight in it, but at once we are forced to turn off the application abruptly and our lips speak nothing but *the heart of David*."

The Doctor plainly intimates that the curses contained in the Psalms are from the *heart* of David, and that in these curses the King of Israel is venting his wrath against his own personal enemies and consequently Psalms containing such anathemas do not suit the christian Church. But what say the scriptures relative to these cursing Psalms? Do they speak of these curses as flowing from the heart of David, or from the Holy Spirit? The most dreadful curses contained in the Psalms are to be found in Psalm 69 which the Doctor quotes, and in Psalm 109, and in the first chapter of the Acts, a quotation is made from each of these Psalms, and instead of coming from the heart of David in the way of personal animosity, they are said, Acts 1: 16, to be the *Scripture of the Holy Ghost*, and to refer not to old Testament times, nor to David's enemies, but to the traitor Judas, the enemy of Christ, and doubtless to all who will act the part of Judas. Would it have been improper for the Apostles to have sung these Psalms at the election of Matthias the successor of Judas? And may they not be sung by us occasionally with advantage, as having a tendancy, if nothing else, to restrain us from the awful crime of the Traitor? All Scripture is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness

There is no evidence from the life of David as recorded in the Bible that his heart is full of fury against his enemies, and that he was disposed to revenge himsef by his sword, or to vent his spite in his Poems. —He is described as a man *after Gods own heart*, and it is very clear from his conduct towards Saul and Shimei and others that he was not disposed to *curse* his enemies, but to *bless* them, and do them good. Even Dr. Watts himself seems to forget in his imitation what

he had said of David's *heart* in his preface. In Psalm 35, which he entitles "love to enemies" he speaks in the strongest terms of David's generous love to his foes, and plainly admits that "love to enemies" is not a feeling peculiar to new Testament Saints.

"Behold the love, the generous love,
That holy David shows:
Behold his kind compassion move
For his afflicted foes."

The maledictions contained in the Psalms, are uttered against the enemies of God and his Church, and if we are to cast them aside because they contain severe denunciations against the wicked, we may upon the same principle expunge many portions of the new Testament. How did Christ the great antitype of David often speak of his enemies during his sojourn on earth? In Math. 23.he uses such language as the following. "Woe unto you scribes, pharisees, hypocrites! —ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?" How does Paul speak of the enemies of Christ? "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathama, Maran-atha." 1 Cor. 16: 22. And what is the prayer of the "souls under the altar," —the saints in Heaven at the feet of Jesus, respecting their own enemies? "How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not *judge* and *avenge* our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" Rev. 6: 10. Do such expressions contain any thing more of *love to enemies*, than the maledictions contained in the Psalms? Why then subject the Psalms, to a dreadful expurgation in order to free them of every expression that seems to militate against the foes of Zion and her King, whilst almost every other portion of the sacred Canon abounds with the same divine denunciations? But is the imitation of Dr. *Watts* entirely clear of those *curses* which render the songs of inspiration so obnoxious to many and so ill adapted to the wants of the Church in her *present* improved condition, though they answered every purpose in Apostolic times? A few quotations from the imitation will shew that it is not *all love to enemies*, any more than the rejected songs of Zion.

"I hate to walk, I hate to sit
With men of vanity and lies;
The scoffer and the hypocrite
Are the abhorrence of mine eyes."

Psalm 26: 2.

The 28th Psalm of the imitation is entitled "Prayer answered," of course the following verse comes in as a part of the answer.

"To sons of falsehood, that dispise
The works and wonders of thy reign,
Thy justice gives the ~~true~~ reward,
And sinks their souls to endless pain."

It must be a dreadful cursing prayer that will meet with such a fearful response. The 58th Psalm is entitled "warning to Magistrates" and the denunciations contained in it against wicked rulers, are more terrible than the language of David. Take the following as a sample.

'Break out their teeth, eternal God:
'Those teeth of Lions dyed in blood;
And crush the serpents in the dust,
As empty chaff, when whirlwinds rise,

Before the sweeping tempest flies
So let their hopes and names be lost."

I select another example:

"Does not my soul detest and hate
The sons of malice and deceit?
Those that oppose thy laws and thee,
I count for ememies to me" Psalm 139: 2.

Why should any reject the Psalms of David because they contain curses against the wicked, and adopt Dr. Watt's imitation which breaths the same sentiment?

The curses against the wicked in the Psalms of David were dictated by the infallible spirit of God; they proceed from that Being whose goodness is infinite, whose mercy is over all his other works.—They are the curses of that God who has declared that he has no pleasure in the death of the wicked—who spared not his own son but delivered him up to the accursed death of the cross for the chief of sinners, for millions of mortal foes; but *from whom* are the maledictions contained in the imitation? From Dr. Watts, a man of like passions with other men, and yet a man professing more love toward the wicked than God whose love is infinite. We have an evidence of the Doctor's spurious charity in his imitation of Psalm 109. In the original this Psalm contains 31 verses, with heavy denunciations against the wicked, referring especially to the case of Judas. In the imitation this Psalm is reduced to 6 verses and is entitled "love to enemies, or the example of Christ;" thus where God curses, a mere mortal essays to bless; and yet, after this display of sickly sentimentalism, the last verse of this abreviated song does not seem to savor much of "love to enemies."

'The Lord shall on my side engage,
And in my Saviour's name
I shall defeat their pride and rage,
Who slander and condemn"—

3. A third argument against the use of David's Psalms, or rather a plea in favour of human composition in the praise of God is, that we employ our own language in prayer, and why not in praise?

To this I reply that the ordinances of prayer and praise are altogether distinct. Prayer is an offering up of our desires unto God for things agreeable to his will:" while praise is rendering to God that which is due to him; it is to extol him for what he is in himself, and for what he has done, and continues to do, in the works of creation, providence and grace. We have some idea of what our wants are, and with Heavens promised help we can make them known to God, but "who can utter the mighty acts of the Lord? who can shew forth all his praise?" No man can do this without the inspiration, and aid of the spirit. God is infinite in all his perfections—omnipotent. omniscient, omnipresent, eternal, unchangeable, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises—exalted far above all the conceptions of men or of angels, his judgments are unsearchable, and his ways past finding out,—who then shall speak his praise? Who that is not favoured with a divine afflatus is competent to provide for the Church a system of Psalmody setting forth the praises of the incomprehensible Jehovah? None but Jehovah himself could provide a book of praises in which his attributes, his ways and works would be properly

magnified. In the book of Psalms he has graciously furnished his people with an ample and authorised collection of hymns, and if we would render to him that *praise* which is *due* we must not use our own language as we do in *prayer* when pleading *for ourselves*, but we must bring with us those divine songs which bear the seal and signature of Heaven. Among men it is a capital offence to liquidate a debt with counterfeit coin, especially when it is known to be such; and surely those who would give "due praise to God" should not imagine that any rhyme will do to discharge such a debt, but those hymns, and those only, which God has authorised will serve to advance his praise.—And further on this point I observe that God has left us no formula or collection of prayer, and commanded us to use them, but he has left us an entire book of praises, and has enjoined on us the use of the same both by precept and example. Christ said to his disciples, *after this manner*, pray ye; Our Father who art in Heaven, &c." He does not direct them to confine themselves to these very words on all occasions, but pray *after this manner*; they were to offer up such or similar petitions, for as the Decalogue contains a summary of the Moral Law, so it would seem that the Lord's prayer is a summary of prayer, and every request which it is proper for us to make before the thrown of grace may, perhaps come under some one or other of its comprehensive petitions. Thus any petition which we may properly offer relative to the advancement of the Redeemers Kingdom in the heart, or in the world, together with the means ordained for its promotion may come under petition of thy Kingdom Come." Every request respecting temporal good things, such as food and raiment, and the means of securing such, may come under the petition, "give us this day our daily bread." We are not confined then to the very words of the Lord's prayer nor restrained by its brevity in our supplications, but we are to pray "after this manner,"—to plead for the things therein suggested. And while we thus plead we have the promise of the Spirit to help our infirmities, and while we sing those Psalms Hymns and spiritual songs—the word of Christ—already furnished to our hands, we are to be "filled with the spirit," but there is no intimation given in God's word that the Spirit will fill, or help the infirmities of those engaged in *making* Psalms for the use of the Church. It will be admitted that it is more difficult to make a Psalm or hymn than a prayer, and if God has authorised us to compose the former as well as the latter, in our own language, why does he promise his aid in the one and not in the other? And why does he engage to assist us in that which is least difficult, while he withholds his aid in that which is most? And why did he provide the Jewish Church with songs of praise dictated by himself, and leave the poor Gentiles to struggle with the difficulties of hymn-making in their own strength? "The Lord's ways are equal;" where his grace is most needed, there it is bestowed. But is it still maintained that we ought to compose our own hymns, as well as employ our own language in prayer, then be it so; let every head of a family prepare his own hymns for family worship,—let every Pastor, or "chief Musician" prepare songs of praise to suit the congregation with which they are connected;—"is any merry?" let him make his own Psalms, as well as his own prayers.

This however is impossible. Not one man in a thousand has the gift of poetry—but few have drunk at the fountain of Castalia—but few are capable of preparing a Hymn fit to be read in private, much less to be sung as praise to God in the congregation of his saints. God knew this. He fore-saw that the number blessed with poetical talents would be very small, and most of this number would be irreligious—that mankind could not sing his praise, unless the matter of praise was prepared to their hand, and in great kindness he has furnished the church with a collection of inimitable poems so that their might be no lack in this part of divine worship. *

Let those who advance the argument now under discussion, enter upon the task of preparing their own Hymns as they make their own prayers; and if they discover that they are unequal to the task—that they must depend upon others to furnish them with hymns, then why not depend on God? Why go to Watts and Wesly, frail erring men, rather than to the Spirit of God, for songs with which to "sing forth the honor of his name, and make his praise glorious?"

4. The opposition that is felt to Rouse's version of David's Psalms, is with many an objection to the use of these Psalms.

With reference to this version I will give one or two extracts from the writings of distinguished men.

Dr. J. T. Presley, whose name is dear to us all, gives a brief history of the introduction of this version into the Church. He says, "during the sitting of the Assembly of divines at Westminster, in the year 1643 this version was brought before that venerable body. Being carefully examined and amended by the Assembly, the use of it was authorized in the year 1645. It was afterwards laid before the Assembly of the Church of Scotland. By the General Assembly it was referred to the consideration of the Presbytries, who reported such corrections and amendments as they thought proper. These amendments were considered by the General Assembly: and after the version had been improved by the combined wisdom of the Presbytries and the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland; the use of it was authorized in the year 1649, as being found to be, when compared with the original more agreeable to the text than any version heretofore prepared.—This version is now used, for the simple reason that it is decidedly the best we have. It is framed upon the principle, of a translation of the original as literal as the laws of versification will allow. The version we do not suppose to be perfect; but admit in relation to it, what all admit in relation to the received translation of the Bible, that, in some particulars, it might be improved.*

Dr. Burns of New Brunswick says, "The version of the Psalms now adopted as the national Psalter, was introduced by the joint authority of English and Scottish Parliaments and ratified by the General Assembly of the church on the 23d Nov. 1649. The translation was made by a very distinguished Hebrew Scholar. Francis Rouse Esq. M. P. one of Cromwell's Counsellors of State, and preferred, on account of his acquaintance with the Greek and Latin languages, to the Provost-

*Address to Students of Theology, Dec. 1836.

* God has given us this whole word for the subject-matter of praise, as well as for prayer.

ship of Eton School. His translation underwent various corrections by a Committee of the General Assembly. In many instances, the versification is far from being smooth or agreeable to the ear. The fact is, a literal, was more an object of attention than an elegant translation and we have the satisfaction to know, that we utter praise in the very words of inspiration.*

Thus it appears that Rouses version as it came from his hand is not now in use, but we use the version of the Westminster divines and of the Church of Scotland. It was not introduced into the churches in that stealthy clandestine manner in which Watt's Imitation has sometimes been forced upon congregations, by introducing it first into the Sabbath school, then using it half the day in the Congregation until opposition has died away, but this version, the first draft of which was prepared by the Hon. Mr. Rouse, comes to us approved and authorized by Church and State—by Parliaments and Church Assemblies. It was subjected to the most rigid and careful investigation by men of "eminent learning and godliness, ministerial abilities, and fidelity." But what are the defects of this version usually called Rouse's that it should be so obnoxious to so many of the friends of Zion? It leaves out no Psalms, nor parts of Psalms—it alters neither the strain of discourse nor the arrangement of the matter,—it contains all the figures and metaphors, and all the ideas that are to be found in the original, and not unfrequently it conveys the sense of the Hebrew, it is said, with greater precision than the prose translation. What then is wrong with this version that it should be so abhorred, and sometimes made the scorn and ridicule, as we have heard even of students of Theology? Why it contains some lines that lack one syllable, and some that have one too many for the measure and hence a jar is made in the music. It contains a few obsolete words, and sometimes the verse is not so smooth and flowing as it is desirable to have it. These defects are not as numerous as some suppose; nor are they at all serious; and the reason why they exist—why the verse is not flowing and melodious, is because Mr. Rouse and those who corrected his work, felt themselves bound to give a fair and faithful translation of the Psalms in metre, and not a paraphrase or an imitation. The work has been admirably accomplished, the only marvel is, that it contains so few imperfections. Rouse was undoubtedly a better Poet than Watts, and if he had felt himself at liberty to range over creation in search of figures and expressions, his poetry would have been more beautiful and majestic than the verse of the much admired Imitator.

King James' edition of the Bible contains some defects, yet it is the word of God, and for this reason it is used. So Rouse's version of the Psalms is in some minor points defective, and admits of improvement, yet it has been given to the Church *as the word of God* by men capable of comparing it with the Hebrew original, and its use has been authorized, across the waters, by the highest authority both in church and State, and *because* it is God's word we employ it in his praise—Let a better version be furnished to the church and we will adopt it upon the same principle that we would adopt a better version of the entire

* Sommerville page 198.

Bible. God seems to have exercised a special providence over this version, so that of all the Hymns and Hymn Books that have flooded the Church for the last half century not one selection appears to have been made from Rouse, though his verse is often equal to the best of the human hymns, and the thought vastly superior. Had it been otherwise; had selections been made from Rouse's version and incorporated with human compositions the advocates of a scripture Psalmody might have been gradually and unwarily led to the use of those Hymn Books in which such selections were to be found, and thus the truth on this subject would have perished or suffered very greatly. But this version is God's word, and he has preserved it from all amalgamation with Hymns of human composure, and amidst the general defection of the times, and the rage for innovation, he has kept alive on earth a small band to defend the truth on this point. But while it is admitted that there are some imperfections in Rouse's version as to smoothness in metre, are the human effusions always perfectly euphonious? Doubtless many deficiencies might be pointed out in the various Hymn books now in use. The following from Watts, Hymn 503:—5 seems to be almost as inharmonious as any thing in Rouse.

"And saints and seraphs sing and praise
"The infinite Three—One.

The pitiful and ridiculous ideas however that are contained in some of the Hymn Books, are faults of a far more serious character than the lack of a few syllables in Rouse. I give one example from many, for without an example the force of an observation is often not so apparent. It is a condescension I admit, to *quote* the following stanzas from Mercer's Cluster, a Baptist Hymn book, but if a christian denomination, respectable for numbers, and many of them the *elite* of the land—if they can command gravity enough to sing these lines as praise to God, surely I may stoop to quote them in order to shew that they, and such as they are, do not suit the Church under any dispensation.

"Of ev'ry preacher I'd complain:
One spoke through pride, and one for gain,
Another's learning small.
One spoke too fast; and one too slow,
One pray'd too loud, and one too low;
Another had no call.
Some walk too straight to make a show,
While others far too crooked go;
And both of these I scorn:
Some odd, fantastic motions make,
Some stoop too low, some stand too straight,
No one is faultless born." Hymn 231: 2, 3.

Truly this man was hard to please. This *stuff*, and more like it, is offered up as *praise* to God! Hymns are to be found in some of the Sabbath school Hymn books called "Infant hymns," and *infant* they are perfectly childish and contemptible, and the child that is employed in committing such to memory in preference to Rouse, is poorly employed. It is freely granted that a great deal of good poetry, and good sentiment too, is to be found in the different Hymn Books now in use, but as the defects of Rouse's version is made a plea for rejecting David's Psalms in the worship of God, my object in noticing a few, and only a few, of the imperfections of modern Hymn books, is to shew that they

are defective too, and egregiously so in some respects, and therefore ought to be cast aside as unfit for christians of the nineteenth century.

In conclusion what, I ask, is to be the *standard* of praise if the Psalms of David are set aside? Every sect will have its own songs, and in these songs its own peculiar sentiments.

Presbyterians and Baptists believe in the *perseverance of the Saints* while the Methodist holds to the notion of *falling from grace*, and they introduce these sentiments into their respective hymn books. Numerous extracts might be taken from Watts and the Cluster relative to the perseverance of the Saints; I shall give one or two quotations from the Methodist hymn book setting forth the opposite sentiment.

Ah! Lord, with trembling I confess,
A gracious soul may fall from grace," Hymn 97.

"I rode in the sky
Freely justified I,
Nor did envy Elijah his seat;
My soul mounted higher
In a Chariot of fire,
And the moon it was under my feet,
O the rapturous height
Of that holy delight
Which I felt in the life giving blood!
Of my Saviour possest
I was perfectly blest
As if filled with the fulness of God,
Ah! where am I now!
When was it, or how,
That I fell from my heaven of grace. Hymn 91: 6—8

Now to say nothing of the strange idea of *praising God for falling from grace*, if this doctrine is false and unscriptural, then such hymns cannot be praise but insult; and if it be true, then those who sing of final *perseverance* sing a falsehood to God. Which of these Hymn Books then is to be the *standard* of praise? Let the rejectors of God's inspired Psalms decide for it is not a matter of indifference.

Again the Presbyterians and Babtists sing of "Election," while on the other hand the Methodists and Universalists sing of universal redemption. I make one or two quotations from the methodist hymn book which will speak for themselves.

"His Soul was once an offering made
For every soul of man" Hymn 1: 8

"A world he suffered to redeem;
For all he hath the atonement made
For those that will not come to him
The ransom of his life was paid" Hymn 13: 4. (new.

Supposing it to be right to use human hymns, if Election is true then it cannot be praise, to sing that Christ "was made an offering for every soul of man." One or other of these opinions must be false, and consequently falsehood is sung to God by way of *praise*.

And further the doctrine of Baptism by immersion is the leading, characteristic doctrine of the Baptist Church, and hence some fifteen songs are devoted to that subject in the Cluster, entitled, "believers baptism," as if baptism by sprinkling or pouring was the baptism of unbelievers! In these songs Jesus is represented as being "plunged beneath the wave." and sinners are urged to imitate his example. But what if immer-

sion is not the proper mode of baptism—what if Christ was baptised *standing on his feet like the Apostle Paul*, (Acts 9: 18) and of course not "plunged in Jordan's swelling flood," then all this poetry about immersion amounts to nothing, it cannot be praise to God. Without attempting to discuss the mode of baptism, I shall make a remark or two to shew that immersion is not the proper mode, and consequently (supposing it right to use human hymns,) those songs of which immersion is the burden, cannot be praise, inasmuch as immersion is not the proper mode, but a mere figment of the fancy. The pitiful, wretched, ridiculous condition in which immersion would have placed the primitive christians, all unprepared as they were for an adventure "beneath the wave," is sufficient argument against such a mode. In what a wretched plight would the multitudes have been placed by immersion who were baptized by John at Jordan? He was baptizing in the wilderness, of course there was no *little house* on the banks of the Jordan in such a region, into which the immersed might enter and change their garments. If any of them chanced to have a change of raiment with them, they would have been compelled after crawling up the banks, to draggle off to the woods, out of sight, to change their apparel! But doubtless some had not "two coats" with them (Luke 3: 11,) or if they had, might not choose to seek a private spot to make an exchange; such then were compelled to stand for hours together on "Jordan's stormy banks," in their wet garments, or lay themselves down on some sunny spot, to bask and *dry*.

If immersion be the mode, then in this wet and wretched condition was the Saviour driven away into the wilderness to be tempted of the Devil; and if he was, it certainly constitutes a part of his *humiliation* and suffering, not usually noticed. If immersion be the mode then in what a predicament was the Eunich placed by this rite, whom Philip baptised? If there was water enough in the *desert* [Acts 8: 26,] in which to immerse this man, it is not likely there were any accommodations there, for changing his robes of state. Behold him then! Queen Candace's Secretary of the Treasury, standing on the high way, drenched to the skin, and left to the disagreeable alternative either to steal off to some private spot and change his robes, or ride on in his wet garments. Instead of riding on "rejoicing" as he did, he would have journeyed on rather peevishly, supposing that the stranger had played a trick on him plunged him and then fled, for fear of a flagellation! Sprinkling would have subjected him to no inconvenience. And if immersion be the mode in what a condition were the 3000 placed who were baptised on the day of Pentecost? They came together in haste, brought no change of garments with them, believed and were baptised on the "same day"—and now behold the spectacle! Three thousand men and women drenched and dreary posting through the streets of Jerusalem to their respective habitations, presenting to the gazing and convulsed multitude, the most pitiful and ludicrous appearance! Immersion then is not the mode of baptism.—Considering the circumstances under which the primitive christians were baptised, often without any accommodations either for plunging or for changing their wet garments, immersion would have been sufficient of itself to have brought christianity into contempt, and made

the religion of the Saviour the scorn and ridicule of the wise and good. But such was not the case,—Christianity was not opposed or sported with in primitive times on account of the mode of baptism. Then as immersion is not the mode of baptism, the fifteen hymns in the Cluster which lay so much stress on this point, are altogether uncalled for, and can form no part of God's praise. But to return from this partial digression.

There ought we say to be some *standard* of praise, for if men are allowed to sing their own hymns of praise, they will sing any thing, and every thing, from rigid Calvinism down to blank Armenianism, and cold, heartless Deism. No doubt many of those who visit the different churches, especially in our Cities, and are fond of singing, have joined with the Presbyterians, Baptists, Methodists, Unitarians &c., in *praising* God in all the different contradictory sentiments held by these various denominations, and perhaps some such may join occasionally with the Romans in chanting a little ditty to the Blessed Virgin. Who then does not see the importance of having some standard of praise? But what can be adopted as a standard unless it be the Psalms of David? The different denominations will never settle down upon Watts' hymn Book as the standard of praise, for when the Methodists and Baptists select a Psalm or hymn from his collection they change it to suit themselves.

Let then the Psalms of David be the standard. They were collected into a book by one of God's Prophets for the special use of his church —they were used by the Saviour and his Apostles, and by the church in her best and purest days both under the old and new dispensation,—they contain the *truth* and nothing but the truth, and when sung "with the spirit and with the understanding," cannot but be acceptable to God. Until this is done division must exist in the Christian ranks, and false and contradictory sentiments will be sung by one party or another as praise to God.

The Universal adoption of David's Psalms throughout the churches would tend greatly to break down the middle walls of partition which divide the gentile church.—Such a measure would be calculated to promote the purity and peace of Zion,—would secure to her enlargement, and a full flow of "grace, mercy and peace" from her exalted King. O! may the happy day soon arrive when the people of God shall see eye to eye on this subject, and see the truth—shall cast away their human and unauthorised effusions, and join in concert with David with Jesus and his Apostles and with the church in her purest days, and sing with united voice in the language of inspiration,

"All lands to God, in joyful sounds,
Aloft your voices raise.
Sing fourth the honour of his name,
And glorious make his praise."

Psalm 66; 1—2.